

A Lifetime Of Life Cycle Management

By Floyd Hertweck CECOM LCMC Staff Historian

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Think the life cycle management initiative started in the 21st century? Think again.

In August 2004 the assistant secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (AL&T) and the commanding general of AMC formalized the Life Cycle Management Initiative through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

The initiative aligned AMC systems-oriented major subordinate commands with their associated Program Executive Offices (PEOs). The action affected operations throughout AMC.

Here the initiative led to the formation of the Communications-Electronics Life Cycle Management Command (now called the CECOM LCMC).



Radio Shop, Camp Alfred Vail, 1919

But the command's Signal Corps predecessors have exemplified life cycle management since the World War I era. In fact, official Signal Corps records from World War II actually use the phrase "cradle to grave management."

Consider the "Research and Inspection Division" established in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer during World War I.

It was responsible for gathering and disseminating information on signal apparatus; for proposing practices related to

devices tested and found satisfactory by the various armies; and for research and development of new equipment used in the Signal Corps.

The division was responsible for information management related to signal apparatus; applying lessons learned from experience with and testing of equipment; inspection of signal equipment to ensure that it was serviceable; research and development (R&D); and providing constructive criticism related to equipment in use.

The Signal Corps continued its life cycle management mentality post war, too, when radio development, R&D, and fielding were a dominant part of the operations.

R&D between the wars resulted in the development of communications equipment that was vital to the success of World War II. Activities included developing field radio sets, fielding equipment, and developing an Air Corps mobile transmitter and “walkie-talkie” radio sets.

Both R&D and field-testing were important aspects of life cycle management and were an integral part of Signal Corps operations.



Signal equipment maintenance, perhaps one of the major elements of life cycle management, also occurred at a more fragmented level. During World War I, signal maintenance operations were located in isolated repair shops in depots in the United States and in larger depots located in France.

Those operations lacked integration into a system of phases or steps. At times, according to some written accounts, maintenance of equipment was almost non-existent in the field and, when available, took place using salvageable parts from equipment accumulated in dumps when a person capable of performing the work was available.

After the war, “Signal Repair Shops” were established as a part of the Signal Depot installations located both in the United States and overseas. Fixed equipment was repaired in the field and equipment that could not be repaired in the field was sent to depot repair shops stateside.

In 1941 a more organized approach to signal equipment repair and maintenance began. During World War II, the Army formed Signal Maintenance Organizations. Those organizations included Signal Repair companies and Repair platoons. The companies and platoons were equipped with their own machine shop trucks. They also had repair trucks equipped for repairing radios, telephones, teletypewriters, precision equipment, and radar.

This period also saw the implementation of “modern” fixed shops located in the field. The modern shops replaced the makeshift shops located at the equipment dumps that were used earlier.

By the end of the war there would be six depot shops, 37 service command shops and six port of embarkation shops located in the United States.

There were 18 shops located outside the United States including thirteen shops in the theaters of operation.

By World War II, logistics related to signal equipment had grown to be an integral part of signal laboratory-related activities.

Procurement districts existed in Philadelphia and in Dayton, Ohio. Included in those operations were inspection zones also located in Philadelphia and Dayton as well as inspection operations in San Francisco and Newark.

Those inspection zones were primarily responsible for ensuring proper performance and durability of equipment in the field.

Signal procurement activities, signal maintenance, R&D, and the other aspects of signal operations were part of the Signal Laboratory.



Addressing the interactions and activities of his and other signal operations in 1944, Col. Rex VanDen Corput, the commanding officer for the Signal Corps Ground Signal Agency of the Signal Laboratory headquartered here stated:

“It is also my responsibility to furnish to the procurement district the necessary information to permit them to place a contract, to assist ... procurement districts during the fabrication of the equipment, to see to it that the engineering bottlenecks are corrected, and when deliveries of equipment start, to work with the Procurement District and the inspection zones to see to it that the government gets value received.”

ECOM established *Monmouth Message*,
August 2, 1962

Corput went on to say:

“Therefore, taking unit equipment from the time of its inception until the time it wears out and becomes obsolete, it is mine except that I do not sign a contract, I do not do the expediting or any of the negotiations and renegotiations you go through and I do not do the routine inspection, but the technical responsibilities for the equipment are mine, with those exceptions, from cradle to grave.”

By 1962, the Army was reorganizing its technical services. That included the Signal Corps. With the reorganization, the Signal Corps ceased to exist as it had in the past and components of the corps were transferred to other areas.

Signal equipment activities transferred to the newly formed Army Materiel Command (AMC). AMC was the first centralized logistics command to exist in peacetime. The Army's electronics activity, known then as the U.S. Army Electronics Command (USAECOM), was a predecessor to CECOM.

The USAECOM's cradle to grave responsibilities included research, design, development, product and maintenance engineering, industrial mobilization planning, new equipment training, wholesale inventory management, supply control and technical assistance to users in the commodity areas of communications, electronic warfare, combat surveillance, automatic data processing, radar, and meteorological materiel.

The CECOM LCMC's predecessor organizations have supported the concept of life cycle management since World War I. That will continue throughout the command's move to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.